

Health Care Costs

The cost of health care is the fastest growing expense in the federal budget. Congressman Blumenauer believes Congress should protect the \$1.3 trillion in savings by implementing the Affordable Care Act over the next twenty years. Congress could find additional savings by expanding pilot projects, such as helping patients during transitions between healthcare providers. Blumenauer introduced the Medicare Transitional Care Act last Congress to ensure patients received good care as they moved from one healthcare setting to another. By improving the quality of care and reducing hospital readmissions, these efforts also save taxpayers \$15 billion a year and improve patient quality of life.

While Congress pursues these efforts, Blumenauer has worked hard to ensure states like Oregon, which have good healthcare outcomes for lower costs than the rest of the nation, are treated fairly under the law. For instance, in 2007, Medicare spending per beneficiary in Orlando was \$8,941. In Portland it was more than 20% lower, at \$6,857; Salem was lower still. If everyone in the country practiced medicine as Oregon and other low spending parts of the country do, healthcare would be considerably cheaper.

The Defense Budget

Congress can trim the defense budget without weakening national security by [eliminating wasteful spending](#) on weapons and bases that are defending against threats that no longer exist. For instance, bringing home U.S. forces based in Germany could save taxpayers \$1.3 billion over the next decade; the New Start treaty reduces the nuclear stockpile by a quarter, and can save \$200 billion over the next ten years.

The vast bureaucracy and runaway expenses of the intelligence community must also be reined in. In the last decade, the intelligence budget – work conducted outside and in addition to the intelligence work of the Defense Department – has more than doubled to a record high of \$78.6 billion for 2011. This growth is unsustainable and receives little Congressional oversight. Given the secrecy of the agencies involved, very little is known by taxpayers about the work and about the relative value of this investment. Reducing this spending parallel to Pentagon plans for reductions of 6% could save taxpayers \$50 billion over ten years.

Rebuilding and Renewing America

Smart, narrowly tailored fees and taxes can reduce the deficit and pay for needed repairs to

roads, railways and bridges. Congressman Blumenauer has authored legislation [to reinstate the Superfund Tax](#)

so industrial polluters pay for the cleaning up the worst industrial waste sites. He supports pegging the gas tax to inflation (while transitioning to a vehicle miles traveled fee with appropriate safeguards for privacy) to fund a clean, efficient, and economical transportation system. He has also co-sponsored bills imposing a small financial transaction tax--reining in the dangerous Wall Street speculation that helped cause the financial crisis—and directing the proceeds to invest in American infrastructure and put people to work. Blumenauer has [also introduced amendments](#)

to support the transportation infrastructure provisions of President Obama's proposed American Jobs Act which would put millions of people to work across the country rebuilding and renewing America.

Agriculture and Natural Resources

Congress should also reform the pork-laden and misguided federal agriculture program. \$33 billion over ten years could be saved by reducing direct payments, which barely benefit Oregon farmers, and by reforming crop insurance. Necessary reforms to the program could also broaden research efforts and nutrition support to expand the benefits of federal farm investments to the State of Oregon while improving the health of all Americans. Congressman Blumenauer's "[Growing Opportunities](#)" report outlines many reforms to agriculture policies to better serve farmers, consumers, and tax payers.

Blumenauer has been a leader in the fight to [end billions in subsidies to mining, oil, and gas](#) companies as they remove valuable commodities from public lands and sell them for huge profits. There are tax benefits to huge oil companies, tax write-offs for oil refineries and pipeline operators, loan guarantees for nuclear energy, vast tax credits—coupled with market requirements and tariff barriers to foreign competition—for ethanol producers, and a range of subsidies such as the Mining Act of 1872 that stipulates the mining leases can be had for \$5 an acre. These companies are among the most profitable the world has ever seen. Taxpayers should not subsidize their bottom line while they destroy public resources.